

Highly Diverse Illinois District uses *Achieve3000 Literacy*[™] to Drive Unprecedented ELA Growth Over Time

Overview

Located about 30 miles southwest of Chicago in a suburban community, Valley View School District 365U is home to the most diverse student population among all Illinois school districts. With student families originating from more than 50 countries, the district represents 64 different languages. More than a third of the 2023–2024 Kindergarten class was made up of emergent bilingual students. In addition, the number of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch in the district is just higher than the national average, with all schools meeting the criteria for being considered “Schoolwide Title I” buildings.

In 2023 and 2024, more Valley View School District students met or exceeded performance in literacy compared to students across the state on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) for ELA 6–8.

DISTRICT INFORMATION



Name:

Valley View School District
365U

Location:

Will County, Illinois

District Profile

15,000 Students

English Learners: 21.6%

21 Schools:

- 12 Elementary
- 5 Middle
- 2 High
- 1 Early Childhood
- 1 Secondary Transition

Free or Reduced-Price Lunch: 63.7%

Special Education: 17%

Ethnicity:

- Hispanic—47.3%
- Black—22.5%
- White—18.9%
- Asian—6.5%

Early Success

Valley View School District 365U is not new to *Achieve3000 Literacy*[™]. As a way to boost literacy skills using informational text and enhance students' overall learning, the district introduced the program in 2011 and fully implemented it in Grades 3–10.

The district saw steady increases early on, with the number of students proficient on the state Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test growing year to year.

In 2018–19, the state changed its standard testing to the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR). District leaders worked with the *Achieve3000 Literacy* team to study the relationship between student performance in *Achieve3000 Literacy* and student performance in ELA on the IAR. That study showed there was a strong and positive correlation between *Achieve3000 Literacy* Lexile measure and IAR ELA performance.

A 2019 Impact Study¹ found:

92% of the students who performed *Achieve3000 Literacy* activities with high fidelity* met or exceeded standards on the IAR ELA.

There was a strong and positive relationship between the Lexile measure in *Achieve3000 Literacy* and the IAR ELA scale score ($r = 0.77$, $p < 0.0001$).

*High fidelity constitutes 45 or more multiple-choice activities and an average first-try score of 75% or higher.

Addressing New Challenges

In recent years, the district faced multiple new literacy challenges, including:

- Recovering learning loss as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Better addressing its growing, diverse student population through accessible, culturally responsive texts.
- Overcoming an instructional gap in shared reading.
- Providing greater access to a wide variety of grade-level texts.

“Achieve3000 Literacy™ has been at the center of Valley View School District’s literacy instruction for over a decade. We have seen tremendous growth and achievement on state accountability assessments during this time. Currently, our learners are surpassing their performance from the pre-pandemic school years, and *Achieve3000 Literacy* was a major factor in our literacy skills recovery. Educators are able to use diagnostic results in the program to tailor instructional practices to meet the unique needs of our student population.

Achieve3000 Literacy ensures that every learner is provided with rigorous, challenging learning opportunities in literacy. We firmly believe that equitable opportunities for every learner, every day, are vital to our success.”

—Dr. Keith Wood, Superintendent

Solution

By employing a multi-pronged, multi-year approach, including *Achieve3000 Literacy* as a cornerstone, the district rebuilt its curriculum to address all of these challenges—with unprecedented success!

The district’s plan was guided by the philosophy that “literacy is built through repeated practice with expert feedback.” Identifying a new personnel and curricular structure, district leaders laid out an eight-year, vertically aligned plan for students in Grades 6–12, starting in the school year 2020–2021.

Embedding *Achieve3000 Literacy* in Curriculum

The literacy team also revisited the district’s use of *Achieve3000 Literacy*. Embedded in the district’s curriculum, the program:

- Helps differentiate instruction at 12 different Lexile levels.
- Engages every student in their own learning.
- Provides formative data for teachers to target instruction.
- Supports improved student outcomes in both fiction and nonfiction texts.
- Accelerates and predicts growth toward college and career readiness.

The district set expectations for use of *Achieve3000 Literacy*[™]. ELA and social studies teachers are required to integrate district-identified *Achieve3000 Literacy* articles into their lessons once per week in ELA, and twice per month in social studies. All lessons using *Achieve3000 Literacy* include the four “I”s—Integration, Introduction, Independent practice, and Instruction. In addition, teachers must provide timely, strategic support to ensure continuous growth.

Reading Diversity

The district also adopted the tenants of the Southern Poverty Law Center’s guidelines for diverse text selection, which include complexity, diversity and representation, critical literacy, and reader and task.² The goal is to create experiences that ensure every student sees themselves in an inclusive, culturally responsive, guaranteed, and viable curriculum.

For each ELA unit, educators ensure that titles were written by a wide representation of authors with differing nationalities and/or races. Teachers also assign *Achieve3000 Literacy* articles to complement each unit with additional relevant, culturally responsive content.

Access to a Breadth of Nonfiction Text

Achieve3000 Literacy has provided teachers with easy access to grade-level nonfiction content, including high-interest articles about current events. Kara Jennings, director of 6–12 literacy and social science, says, “In our ELA classes, we used to focus primarily on fiction. *Achieve3000 Literacy* has helped us regularly

expose students to nonfiction. We now pair a nonfiction *Achieve* article with each short story, providing both literature and nonfiction weekly. Historically, our students perform better with literature, so having nonfiction options from *Achieve3000 Literacy* readily available is very helpful.”

Shared Learning That Is Also Differentiated

One of Valley View’s instructional specialists for 6–12 literacy sees *Achieve3000 Literacy* as a critical tool for meeting students’ individual needs in a way that also enables them to develop shared reading skills. He says, “As classroom teachers, we know we don’t always have the time to meet every student at their Lexile level. *Achieve* allows us to do that. We can meet students at 12 different Lexile levels all at the same time with the same content, which is really powerful because it allows the students to be able to have a cohesive conversation, but they’re accessing the text at the level they need.”

Progress Tracking

Accountable for their data and growth, teachers and students set goals and track achievements by checking data continuously. Beginning with a LevelSet Assessment at the start of the school year, students can see their milestones throughout the grade level. As a result, students take agency in knowing and growing their Lexile measures.

Teachers also use unique approaches to make learning more fun. Grade 6 ELA teacher Heather Bruno designates Fridays as “*Achieve Day*,” when the class works through interactive instead of shared reading exercises. Bruno likes that *Achieve3000 Literacy*[™] provides a breadth of informational text, which she believes helps struggling learners to achieve across subjects. Bruno also likes to use incentives to further motivate students, such as charts, stickers, and small rewards like her home-baked goods.

Results

The outcome of the district’s plan and hard work is nothing less than outstanding. For example, in 2022–2023, Valley View School District 365U’s eighth grade ELA student growth percentile was greater than 67% of their peers across the state.

In 2023–2024, more Valley View School District students met or exceeded performance compared to students in Grades 6–8 across the state on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) for ELA.³

Further, middle school students showed the greatest growth in writing that the schools have ever achieved. The district credits “collective efficacy” through which Grade 8 students have received three years of vertically aligned instruction. IAR results indicate that each cohort is progressing year-over-year at each grade level. For example, the cohort below shows outstanding recovery and sustained excellence since the COVID-19 pandemic.

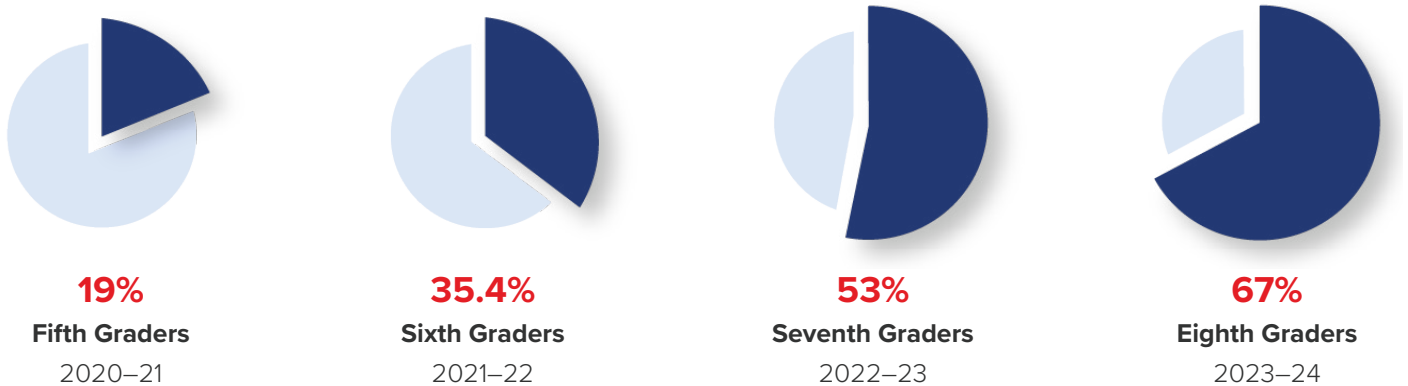
When the district studied student results from *Achieve3000 Literacy* in 2019, educators saw the strong correlation between *Achieve3000 Literacy* data and IAR ELA results. That correlation continues today, providing an excellent tool for educators to predict IAR achievement.

The thing that’s really special about *Achieve Literacy* is that it doesn’t keep students at their Lexile level. It allows them to grow. Without *Achieve3000 Literacy*, I honestly don’t think we would see that growth.

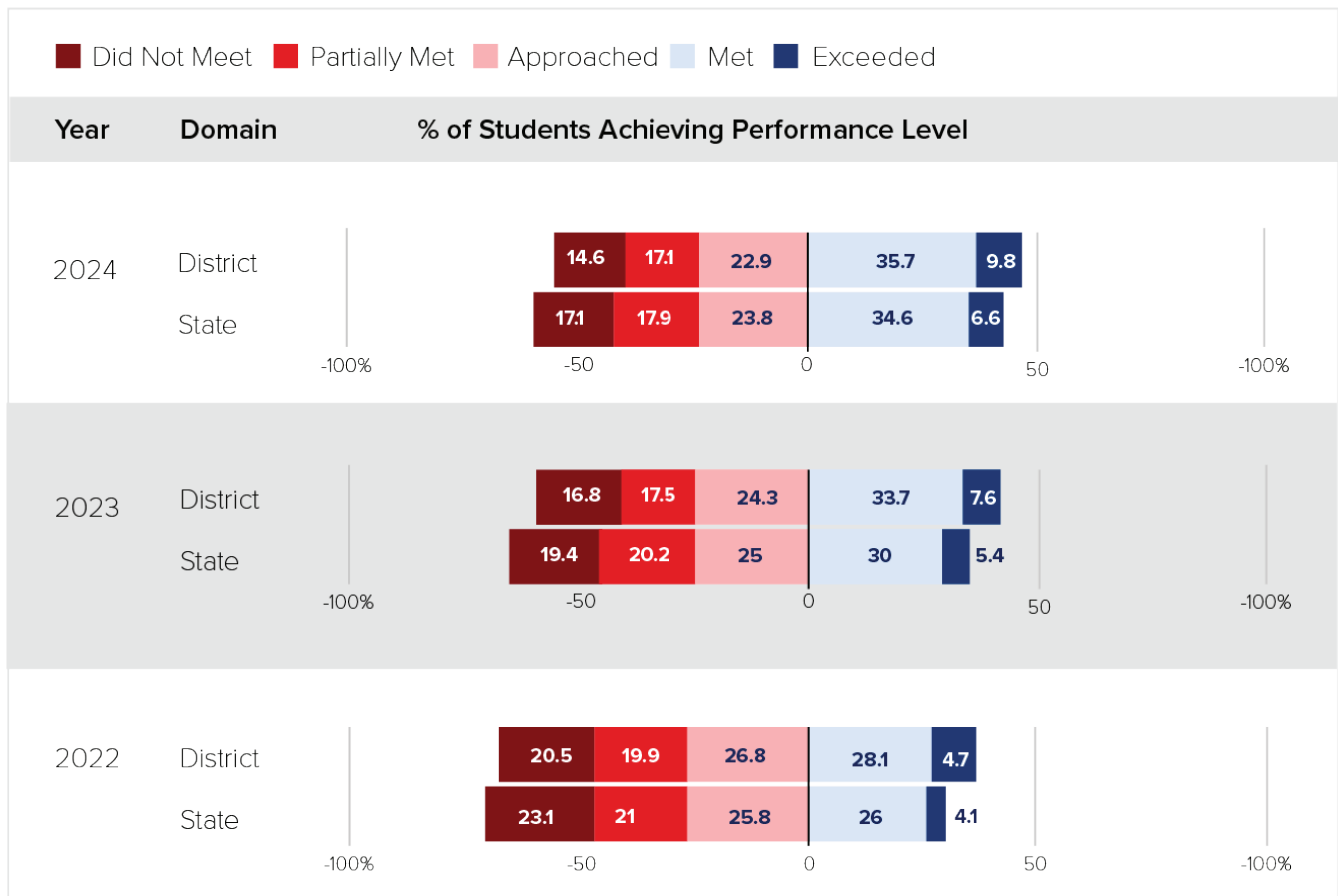
—Instructional Specialist for Literacy, Grades 6–12

Valley View School District

ELA Average % of Students Meeting/Exceeding on the IAR



Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) for ELA Valley View School District vs. State



About *Achieve3000 Literacy*[™]

Achieve3000 Literacy is an adaptive, digital platform proven to double and even triple expected learning gains for students in Grades 3–12. Differentiated content, vocabulary, and learning scaffolds ensure equitable access—driving literacy growth and positive outcomes for all learners.

References

¹*Achieve3000* Impact Report, “Boosting IAR Performance in Valley View Community Unit School District with *Achieve3000 Literacy*,” 2019. https://www.achieve3000.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Achieve3000_ValleyView-ImpactStudy.pdf

²Southern Poverty Law Center, “Reading Diversity: A Tool for Selecting Diverse Texts,” Extended Edition, Teaching Tolerance, 2016. <https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/Reading-Diversity-v2-Redesign-WEB-Nov2017.pdf>

³Illinois Report Card, Valley View School District 365U, 2022–2023 <https://irc.isbe.net/District>.

To learn more about *Achieve3000 Literacy*, visit:

mheonline.com/a3kliteracyforall

